

REPRESENTATIVE SHERRY APPLETON

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

23RD DISTRICT



Dear neighbors,

It is an honor to represent the 23rd District, which covers Bremerton, Silverdale, Poulsbo, Kingston, Bainbridge Island, and the surrounding areas of the Kitsap peninsula.

Part of my job representing the citizens of the 23rd District is keeping you informed about key issues. This past summer I went door to door to talk to people about their priorities; and they came across loud and clear.

- Better schools,
- Better jobs, and
- Better health care.

I am committed to breaking through partisan gridlock in Olympia to pass common-sense reforms.

The citizens of Washington State want us to be partners, not partisans. It is time to get to work, serving people, not political parties.

I'm interested in what you think – and in your family's experiences with these three issues.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your representatives to the Legislature. As always, I welcome your ideas, comments and questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Sherry Appleton".

Rep. Sherry Appleton

**REPRESENTATIVE
SHERRY APPLETON**

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

HONORING OUR SOLDIERS

Being married to a 32 year veteran of the United States Navy, I understand first hand the hardships our soldiers and families must endure during a time of war. One of my top priorities in Olympia is to make sure the State does everything it can to help those who serve our Country. In one of my first acts as a legislator I co-sponsored a resolution to honor the Washington National Guard. *I wish to thank them for their daily sacrifices and continued vigilance in protecting our freedoms at home and abroad.* I continued my commitment to those who serve by sponsoring legislation that will:

- **Offer a property tax exemption to widows or widowers of honorably discharged veterans.** (HB 1509)
- **Waive all or portions of college tuition for veterans or the children of soldiers who were disabled or missing in action.** (HB 1174)
- **Require counties to establish veteran assistance programs.** (HB 1189)

Military families have long been an important and welcome addition to our community. They have provided so much to our lives. That's why I will always be an advocate on their behalf.

WHAT HAVE I BEEN WORKING ON?

The legislative session has gotten off to a fast start and I have been working hard on many pieces of legislation. I feel that the bills that I have sponsored reflect the values of the 23rd district. Here is a snapshot of what has happened in this year's legislative session.

- **Public Works Trust Fund** (House Bill 1049): Authorizes loans to local governments for infrastructure improvements. The department of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED) estimates that 6,000 new construction jobs and over \$620 million dollars in economic activity will be generated as a result of this legislation. This

includes close to \$5 million for projects in the 23rd district. This bill has passed both the House and the Senate and has been signed into law by the Governor.

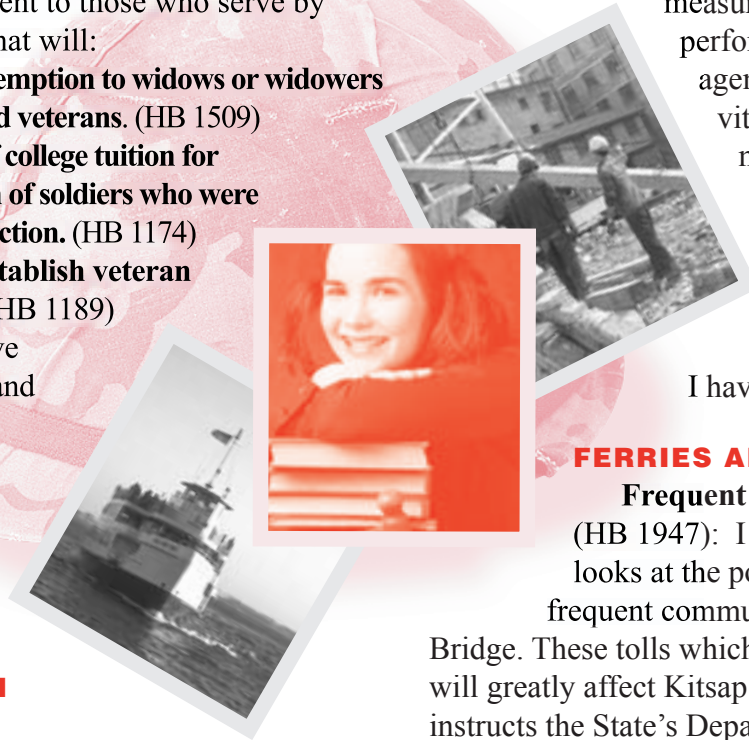
- **Simple Majority** (HJR 4205): Finding funding for our schools has become increasingly difficult. This legislation would eliminate the current 60 percent supermajority requirement first approved in 1932 to pass a school levy. Should it pass the Legislature this year, the decision to amend the state Constitution would go before voters in November.

- **Performance Audits** (House Bill 1048): This measure requires independent performance audits of all state agencies and operations. It is vital that we spend tax dollars more efficiently and work to restore trust in government. Please visit my website at <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/appleton/> to see a complete list of legislation I have sponsored.

FERRIES AND BRIDGES:

Frequent commuter toll discounts (HB 1947): I sponsored legislation that looks at the possibility of a discount toll for frequent commuters of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. These tolls which will be implemented in 2007 will greatly affect Kitsap County residents. The bill instructs the State's Department of Transportation to examine the impact of providing a discount to frequent commuters and other groups such as students, seniors and low income families.

Ferry fuel exemption (HB 1948): The second major transportation reform that I sponsored seeks to drive down ferry rates by exempting fuel used by Washington State Ferries from the State's excise tax. By helping ferries deal with the skyrocketing cost of fuel, we can lower operating costs leading to cheaper fares. Kitsap County is extremely dependent upon our ferries and bridges and we need to make sure they remain affordable for our communities.



HEALTH CARE UPDATE:

THE ISSUE

Access to health care and prescription drugs have been growing national and state issues. For the past several years citizens have raised concerns about the difficulty of obtaining health care services, the absence of equal mental health coverage, and the outrageous costs of prescription drugs. This year we face the challenge of solving our health care problems while simultaneously balancing the current \$1.8 billion dollar deficit.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The cost of many prescription drugs in the U.S. are astronomical compared to what other countries pay. Over 700,000 Washington residents, including an estimated 210,000 seniors, don't have prescription drug coverage and have to buy prescriptions at full retail price. Many Washingtonians, who struggle to make ends meet, cross the border every year to buy prescription drugs.

HB 1194, 1168, 1316, and 1219 all relate to making prescription drugs more affordable and accessible. These bills would set up a prescription drug consortium so individuals and businesses get better prices on prescription drugs. Others would allow the re-importation of medicines.

Licensing Canadian pharmacies (HB 1168): This is the first bill that I authored in the legislature. Seniors are already buying their prescriptions from across the border in Canada. This bill would help to ensure these prescriptions are safe by allowing Canadian pharmacies to register here in Washington State as long as they meet all of the State's safety requirements.

Currently the State's Board of Pharmacy licenses pharmacies from other states; it makes sense to allow pharmacies that are already providing medications to Washington residents to meet current safety standards.

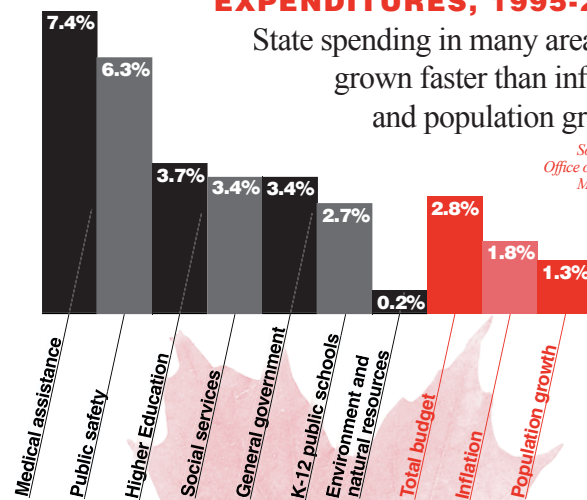
Re-importation from Canadian Pharmacies (HB 1194 & HB 1316): There is no reason a prescription should cost up to 80 percent more than an identical prescription in Canada. Both of these bills which I was happy to support seek to lower healthcare costs by allowing citizens and the state to buy prescriptions from Canada at a reduced rate.

Prescription Drug Purchasing Consortium (HB 1219): I was happy to support legislation allowing citizens, businesses, unions and local governments to join the state in pooling their resources to lower drug costs. This drug-purchasing consortium would not only help all participants save money through lower state-negotiated drug prices, it would help our state bargain for even greater savings in the future. This bill is strongly supported by local governments, AARP and others who represent Washington's seniors and consumers.

AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH IN STATE EXPENDITURES, 1995-2004

State spending in many areas has grown faster than inflation and population growth.

Source: State Office of Financial Management



MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

Each year, about one in five Americans experiences a diagnosable mental illness. More than 45 million adults and nearly 10 million children suffer from such illnesses, and unfortunately, most of those in need of treatment go without. Indeed, four of the ten leading causes of disability are mental illnesses.

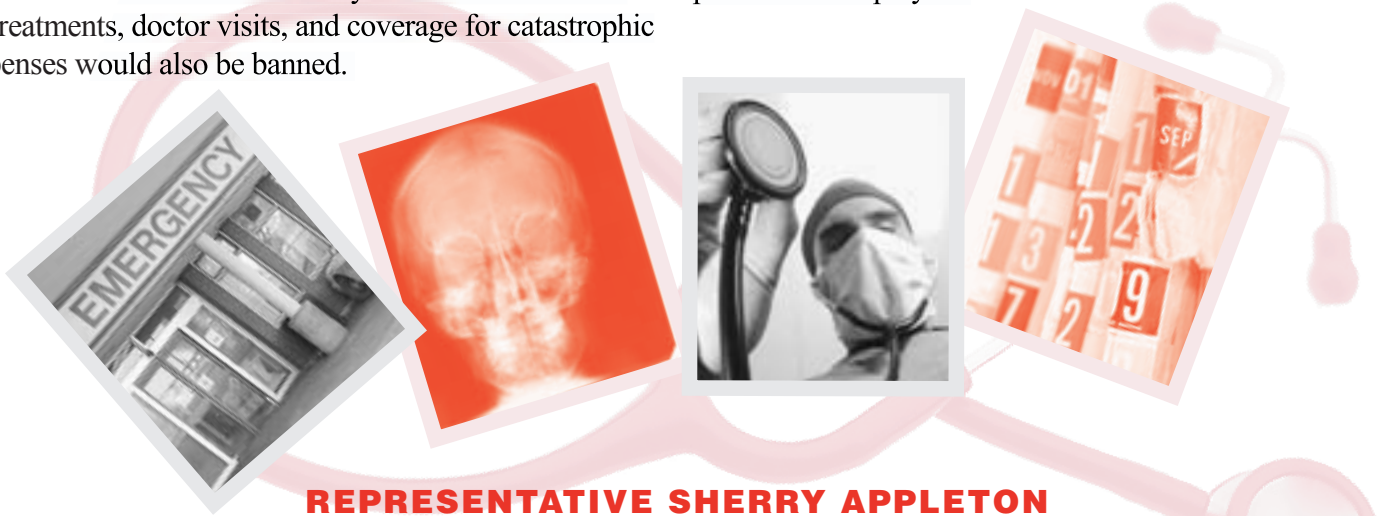
These are preventable diseases that cost our communities money. If people do not find treatment they often find their ways into our hospitals and prisons, one of the most expensive ways to treat a preventable disease.

HB 1154 would bar insurers from requiring higher co-pays, deductibles or other out-of-pocket expenses for mental health treatment than they require for other medical services. Discriminatory limits on the number of treatments, doctor visits, and coverage for catastrophic expenses would also be banned.

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH CARE POOL

One of the biggest challenges small businesses face is providing health insurance for their employees. In the past several years, small employers have experienced double digit premium increases year after year. These increases have resulted in employers shifting more and more of the costs of insurance onto their employees, or abandoning coverage altogether.

Several bills before the legislature would expand health benefit plan options to employers by offering enrollment in programs administered by the Health Care Authority. Participating in a large purchasing pool allows employers to negotiate favorable premium rates and improvements in the quality of health care services provided to employees.



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